Maharashtra to Central India Coal Company in Chandrapur, Maharashtra;

(c) the total area leased by Government of Maharashtra and the approximate quantity of coal deposit in the area;

(d) the price at which the area was leased to CICC; and

(e) whether there was any competitive bidding for leasing the area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) Before a lease for mining coal can be granted by the State Government, the previous approval of the Central Government is required to be obtained under proviso to Section 5(1) of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957. The mining plan for any coal mining block has also to be approved by the Central Government.

(b) The approval of the mining plan prepared by the Central India Coal Company Limited was communicated on 13.9.96. However, the previous approval of the Central Government under Section 5 (1) of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act to the grant of a mining lease has not yet been granted.

(c) and (d) A%-the previous approval of the Central Government to the issuance of the lease has not been accorded, the Government of Maharashtra could not have leased mines to Central India Coal Company Limited. Therefore the questions raised in these parts do not arise.

(e) No, Sir.

Gradewise fixation of prices of coking and non-coking coal

1254 SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for washery grade IV of coking coal, price concession over washery grade III is much lower than for washery grade III over washery grade II;

(b) whether it is also a fact that ash content range in washery grade IV is much wider than for washery grades III and II; and

(c) if so, the scientific basis for fixation of gradewise prices of coking and non-coking coal and in what manner the interests of users of relatively high ash content coal are protected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) and (b) Washery Grade II, III and IV are coking coals. The pithead prices of these grades announced by Coal India Limited (CIL) with effect from 1.4.97 in respect of its subsidiary companies namely, Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL), Central Coalfields Limited (CCL), Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL), Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) and South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL), the price differentials between the consecutive grades and the range of ash content of these grades are given below:—

Grade	Ash per-centage	Ash percent range differ-ence	Pithead prices ROM BCCL	Price Diffe rential between two con secutive grades	Pithead prices ROM ECL/ CCL SECL	Price diffe rential between two con secutive grades	Pithead prices ROM WCL	Price diffe rential between two con secutive grades
			(Rs.)	(Rs.)	(Rs.)	(Rs.)	(Rs.)	(Rs.)
Washery	21 to 24	3	880		848		848	
Grade II				230		221		83
Washery	24 to 28	4	650		627		765	
Grade II				45		43		137
Washery	28 to 35	7	605		584		628	
Grade II								

(c) The pricing of coking coals which include the Washery Grade coal has been deregulated by the Central Government with effect from 22.3.96. Subsequent to such deregulation, CIL is competent to fix the prices of all grades of coking coal keeping in view the production costs for each grade.

Demand and supply of coal in Punjab

1255. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the demand and supply of coal in the State of Punjab;

(b) the specific reasons for short supply of coal to the Punjab; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) and (b) The requirement! of coal for various consumers are assessed industry/sector-wise for the whole country and are not aliened State-wise. Coal companies are supplying coal based on the programmes submitted by the consumers in accordance with sponsorships issued by the respective sponsoring authorities. Coal supply to power and cement industries are made based on short-term linkages established by the Standing Linkage Committee (SLC) to these sectors.

Linkages *vis-a-vis* despatches of coal to power stations of Punjab during the year 1996-97 are as under:

(In '000 tonnes)

Linkages 1996-97	Despatches 1996-97 (Prov.)	Despatches 1995-96
7290	7025	6365

As per records of Ministry of Coal, there appears to be no cement plants in the State of Punjab. The shortfall is because of unloading problems at the power stations.